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Urim and Thummim

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Abstract: This article presents a brief historical sketch of what is known about the Urim and Thummim, from the brother of Jared, Abraham, Moses, Mosiah, and Joseph Smith.

that, can you lose your impulses, your desires, for the love you have for your parents? If so, you will save your life and your home.

Husbands, that applies to you. Very frequently discords arise in the home because husbands desire to save their own dignity and have their own way, have their own wishes carried out. Wives desire the same. Some exercise their prerogative to have the last word. Husbands are sometimes even more eager to have it than wives. Each really is trying to save himself or herself; and instead of having harmony and peace in the home there arises discord. Instead of saving the life of harmony in the home, you lose it, merely because you are seeking to save your own selfish life, or have your own selfish way. Better to lose that desire. Say nothing, and in losing your desire and that feeling of enmity, of ruling, of governing, you say nothing, and you gain your life in the home.

In a broader sense you can apply that to life. Browning in that great poem "Paracelsus" illustrates that same truth. You remember how he started out to save himself, that is, to gain knowledge as a great scientist with the intention of handing it down haughtily to the people. Festus, his friend, said, "You had better not withdraw from the people." That is the great benefactor.

But Paracelsus was haughty. He was

proud. When Festus warned him, Paracelsus answered, saying, "Festus, are there not two experiences in the life of a diver? One, when a beggar he prepares to plunge, one when a prince who rises with his pearls. Festus, I plunge." His friend said, "We await you when you rise."

Years afterwards, after a life of scientific inquiry, and a successful life, his friend found him on his deathbed in a Greek conjurer's house. Without going into the story I will merely say, Paracelsus recognizing his friend, said: "Festus, I have found the secret of life."

"What is it? All that I have depends on that answer."

And the great philosopher said: "It is this: Live in all things outside yourself by love. That was the life of God. It ought to be our life."

In harmony with that, I read what the Prophet Joseph said, quoting the passage with which our conference opened:

"Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work; . . .

"And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

"Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence." (D. & C. 4:2-3, 5-6.)

"He that would save his life" in the home, in business, in society, in politics, and particularly in association with his fellow men should lose that life for the good of others. "He that will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (See Matt. 16:25.)

God bless you stake presidents, presidencies, high councilmen, bishoprics of wards, members of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, Aaronic Priesthood quorums, members of the auxiliary organizations—Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Associations, Primary Associations.

Now I have included the entire membership of the Church, excepting the little babes. I repeat, God bless you that the spirit of this great conference may go with you to bring peace into your hearts as you lose yourselves for the good of others; harmony in your homes as you curtail that impetuous tendency to cause discord, as you control that tongue and do not say the thing that hurts.

God bless the youth throughout the world, members of the Church particularly, that they may seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that all else may be added unto them, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Your Question



by Joseph Fielding Smith

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

Urim and Thummim

Question:

"Will you please tell us something about the Urim and Thummim? Was the one used by the Prophet Joseph Smith the one had by Abraham? If so, how did he get it?"

Answer:

The history concerning the Urim and Thummim, or "Interpreters" as they are called in the Book of Mormon, is not very clear. Abraham had the Urim and Thummim by which he received revelations of the heavenly bodies, as he has recorded in the book of Abraham. (See Abraham 3:1-4.) What became of these after his death we do not know. Aaron also had the Urim and Thummim, and these were, evidently from the reading of the Bible, handed down among the priests of Aaron from generation to generation. (References: Ex. 28:30, Lev. 8:8, Num. 27:21, Deut. 33:8, 1 Samuel 28:6, Ezra 2:63, Neh. 7:65.) The Lord gave to the brother of Jared the Urim

and Thummim which he brought with him to this continent. These were separate and distinct from the Urim and Thummim had by Abraham and in Israel in the days of Aaron. The account of this set is found in Ether 3:22-28, and, in part, is as follows:

"And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read.

"And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write.

"For behold, the language which ye shall write I have

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write.

"And the Lord said unto him: Write these things and seal them up; and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men.

"And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that he should seal up the two stones which he had received, and show them not, until the Lord should show them unto the children of men." (Ether 3:22-24, 27-28.)

We have no record of Lehi bringing with him to America the Urim and Thummim. The Lord did give to Lehi the Liahona, which was a ball which directed him the way he should go, and writing appeared on it from time to time, but this was not the Urim and Thummim. (See D. & C. 17:1.)

King Mosiah possessed "... two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow" (Mosiah 28:13) called by the Nephites "Interpreters," with which he translated the Jaredite record (see *ibid.*, 28:11-14), and these were handed down from generation to generation for the purpose of interpreting languages. How Mosiah came into possession of these "two stones" or Urim and Thummim, the record does not tell us, more than to say that it was a "gift from God." (*Ibid.*, 21:28.) Mosiah had this "gift" or Urim and Thummim before the people of Limhi discovered the record of Ether. They may have been received when the "large stone" was brought to Mosiah with engravings upon it, which he interpreted by the "gift and power of God." (Omni 20-21.) They may have been given to him, or to some other prophet before his day, just as the brother of Jared received them—from the Lord.

That the Urim and Thummim, or two stones, given to the brother of Jared were those in the possession of Mosiah appears evident from the following statements in the Book of Mormon:

The brother of Jared was commanded to seal up his writings of the vision he had when Christ appeared to him, so that they could not be read by his people. This vision was in a language which was confounded, for it was not to go forth until after the resurrection of Christ. The Urim and Thummim were also sealed up so that

they could not be used for the purpose of interpreting those sacred writings of this vision, until such time as the Lord should grant to man to interpret them. When they were to be revealed, they were to be interpreted by the aid of the same Urim and Thummim. (See Ether 3:21-28.)

The people of Limhi brought to Mosiah a record, "... engraven on plates of ore," (Mosiah 21:27) which record Mosiah translated by the aid of "two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow," and which gave an account of the Jaredites. (See *Ibid.*, 28:11-19.) In translating this record Mosiah kept from going forth to the people that particular part forbidden of the Lord to be revealed until after he was lifted up upon the cross. (See Ether 4:1.) These sacred revelations given to the brother of Jared were kept from the Nephite people, as well as many other things, until after the resurrection of Christ. (See Alma 63:12.) After the appearing of the Savior to the Nephites, the vision of the brother of Jared was revealed to the Nephites. When Moroni made his abridgment of the record of Ether, he copied on his record the vision of the brother of Jared. (See Ether 4:2-7.) At the command of the Lord, however, Moroni also sealed up the greater things in this vision and the "interpreters"—which were the same "two stones" had by the brother of Jared, so that this vision should not be made known even in our day among the Gentiles, in the day of their wickedness (see 2 Nephi 27:8); "... until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord." (Ether 4:6.) So we today do not have the fulness of the account written and sealed up by the brother of Jared and again sealed by Moroni. This part of the record the Prophet Joseph Smith was forbidden to translate. We have, then, received but the "lesser part." (3 Nephi 26:8-11.)

Joseph Smith received with the "breastplate" and the plates of the Book of Mormon, the Urim and Thummim, which were hid up by Moroni to come forth in the last days as a means by which the ancient record might be translated, which Urim and Thummim were given to the brother of Jared. (See D. & C. 17:1.)

Joseph Fielding Smith



—Photograph by J. K. Anderson